DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 309 518 EA 020 978

AUTHOR	Huffstutter, Sandra; Smith, Stuart C.
TITLE	Managing Time and Stress.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	89
CONTRACT	OERI-R-86-0003
NOTE	25p.; In "School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence" (EA 020 964). For first edition, see ED 209 736.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Attitudes; *Coping; Elementary Secondary Education; Expectation; Job Performance; Planning; Scheduling; Social Values; *Stress Management; *Stress Variables; *Time Management
IDENTIFIERS	*Social Readjustment Rating Scale

ABSTRACT

Chapter 14 of a revised volume on school leadership, this chapter offers many practical suggestions for managing time and reducing stress. The primary challenge is to unblock the route to effective time/stress management by recognizing unproductive values and attitudes (such as overreliance on the Protestant work ethic or the appearance of excessive busyness) and replacing them with productive ones through self-knowledge and job control. Leaders with an overall purpose in mind more easily clarify their role and its functions, objectives, and areas of responsibility. "Classical" time-management strategies include goal-setting and prioritizing, using a daily time-log, and reducing time-wasters (visitors, telephone calls, paperwork, procrastination, and the inability to say "no" or to schedule or delegate). Since time and stress management are corrrelated, each requires the same approach: a shift in attitude and awareness level, self-analysis and identification of stressors in the daily stress log, and practical management techniques. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale can help orient administrators to common stressors and their relative magnitudes. Practical suggestions are provided for managing controllable and uncontrollable stressors and for handling organizational stress affecting employees. Increased teacher support, collegial sharing networks, and employee wellness programs can work wonders. (MLH)

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Chapter 14

Managing Time and Stress

Sandra Huffstutter and Stuart C. Smith

Office graffiti. You find it in virtually every workplace and the subject is virtually always the same: stress arising from work and the lack of time to do work right. Coffee mugs, plastic plaques, and tacky statuary communicate the wit and wisdom of these occupational plagues.

> "As soon as the rush is over I'm going to have a nervous breakdown."
>
> "My cup runneth amuck."
>
> "Why is there never enough time to do the job right, but always enough time to do it over?"
>
> "Worker's Dilemma:
>
> 1. No matter how much you do, you'll never do enough.
> 2. What you don't do is always more important than what you do do."

Folk wisdom aside, it is no secret that the management of time and stress in the workplace has become a major concern to employee and employer alike. It has been estimated that stress-related dysfunctions each year cause several billion dollars of losses in industrial productivity. Also, occupational stress reduces the worker's capacity for intelligently managing his or her time.

This true "Worker's Dilemma" has definitely not bypassed the schools. Everyone seems to be aware of the problems, but few seem to do anything constructive (aside from the therapeutic posting of graffiti) about them. Why is this the case? Let's take a look at two kinds of mental sets: those that block and those that boost the effective management of time and stress.

Blocks to Time/Stress Management

One reason for resistance to a change in work habits is rooted in our national character. The Protestant Work Ethic dictates that we labor ceaselessly—or, at least, appear to do so. Any change in work habits that would provide worker "down-time" would therefore be morally suspect, to say the least.

Another set of values that conflicts with effective office management includes those oriented against any form of regimentation. "Go with the flow" and "hang loose" attitudes accentuate the value of spontaneity at the expense of productivity and the mental ease provided by stable routine.

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A major block to the effective management of time and stress is the employee's actual cherishing of time/stress pressures. In many organizations, excessive busyness is a sign of status—the mark of being indispensable—and stress is the "designer label" of that status. Excessive busyness is also cherished as a respectable form of procrastination—of avoiding important tasks due to preoccupation with innumerable trivial tasks. Thus Alan Lakein, a popular advocate of time management, describes the "Overdoer" as someone who is "so busy doing things that he has no time to assess their true value."

The laughable excesses of some time management advocates also constitute a block to serious consideration of their programs. Suggestions for solving problems while you sleep, practicing isometrics whenever placed "on hold," and listening to language tapes while commuting all seem excessive. Such time management zealots probably need to be reminded of Bunuel's Law (quoted from Block): "Overdoing things is harmful in all cases, even when it comes to efficiency."

A final and more serious impediment to time/stress management is the "It won't work here" attitude. It's human nature to feel that one's own business, staff, service, whatever, is unique and not reducible to generalized precepts. This attitude is particularly tempting in a "people business" like education. There is no evidence, however, that time problems vary among different kinds of organizations.

In his highly readable monograph on time management for the school administrator, Gilbert Weldy asserts that difficulties in the management of time cut through distinctions between education and industry. Principals, he says, face the same kinds of problems with effective time management and to the same degree as do business managers. He cites a study of high school principals in which 86 percent of the respondents indicated that "lack of time" was their greatest obstacle to adequate job performance.

The primary challenge, then, is this: To *unblock* the route to effective time/stress management by recognizing unproductive values and attitudes (like those just described) and then to make a commitment to replace any unproductive values with productive ones. Time and stress management is primarily a challenge to your values and attitudes and only secondarily a challenge to your skills.

Boosts to Time/Stress Management

Management consultants are given to speaking in aphorisms. Peter Drucker, whose management expertise has made him the patron saint of both MBA students and executives of multinational corporations, says, "Time is the scarcest resource, and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed." Alan Lakein opens his best-selling *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life* with the words: "Time is life. It is irreversible and irreplaceable. To waste your time is to waste your life, but to master your time is to master your life and

make the most of it."

These eminently quotable consultants developed their aphoristic style out of a need to motivate—to motivate their clients to value those character traits, attitudes, and concepts that facilitate effective management. These facilitators can be grouped into two broad categories: "self-control" and "job-control." Let's take a brief look at each before turning to practical skills and strategies for improved management of time and stress.

Self-Control

Fundamental to self-control is self-knowledge. What are your strengths, your weaknesses, your skills? What is your personality type, your physiological type? Are you a detail person or a "big picture" person? Are you a reader or a listener? A participant or an observer? A morning person or an evening person? What forces shaped your past? What do you project to be the shape of your future?

As Hamlet has taught us, knowledge of self is unproductive unless coupled with discipline in action and behavior. Alan Lakein devotes whole chapters to the subjects of self-discipline and willpower and how to bolster both. Like the ancient Greeks' ideal of the "Golden Mean" and the Bible's exhortation that "to everything there is a season," Lakein's book espouses balance and control: a time for work and a time for relaxation, a time for working together and a time for working alone.

Another sort of balance and control is discussed by management consultant and writer W. A. Mambert. Linking time management directly to self-knowledge and maturity, Mambert issues a caveat against "excess emotional and mental baggage," including "compulsive talking, over-defensiveness, over-explaining, self-justification, fear, guilt, worry, gossip, office politics, over-sensitivity, and similar subjective activities related to being a basically immature person."

Self-knowledge plus self-discipline equals maturity, and maturity boosts one's potential for effective management of time and stress.

Job-Control

Like self-control, job-control requires knowledge—knowledge of the primary purpose of your organization and of your own specific role therein. In *Executive Time Management*, Helen Reynolds and Mary Tramel assert that the employee's raison d'etre is to further the organization's "primary purpose" (for instance, to give all students access to a quality education), not merely to perform the functions listed in the employee's job description. The authors warn against confusing your "functions" (developing curriculum, attending school board meetings, supervising teachers, disciplining students, and so forth) with your primary purpose, since your value as an executive is measured in degrees of effectiveness. It is not so much how efficiently you perform your function

as it is how effectively you move toward the attainment of the organization's primary goal.

With your overall purpose firmly in mind, you will find it easier to clarify your role and its functions, objectives, and areas of responsibility. Such a clarification requires precise communication between yourself, your staff, and your superiors, but will pay off in reduced stress and reduced time misuse caused by excessive, ambiguous, or conflicting responsibilities. Role clarification as a technique for time and stress management will be discussed in greater detail later. Here the emphasis is on its importance as a *facilitator* for the initiation of time/stress management strategies within your office.

Now, keeping in mind the importance of commitment and control, let's turn to practical procedures for improved management of time and stress.

Time Management Strategies

If time management was a mystery twenty years ago, it certainly is not today—as a quick check of your library's journal indexes and card catalogue will confirm. The variety of titles are strikingly unvaried in content, so much so that one can speak of a "classical" approach to time management—a four-part, rather circular process that includes the following:

1. goal-setting, which leads to prioritizing
2. keeping a daily time log, which leads to the identification of time-wasters
3. management of time-wasters, which leads to increased discretionary time
4. wise use of discretionary time, which leads to the accomplishment of those goals identified in step one

Goal-Setting and Prioritizing

Just as the smart shopper does not shop without a grocery list, and the smart teacher does not teach without a course outline, so the smart administrator needs a written list or outline of professional goals to administer effectively. The operative word here is *effectively*. When Reynolds and Tramel asserted that "your value as an executive is measured in degrees of effectiveness," they were reiterating a key distinction made by Peter Drucker: the distinction between effectiveness and efficiency. Drucker insists that "the executive's job is to be effective," not efficient—which means getting "the right things done," rather than merely doing things right. And those "right things" relate directly to advancing the organization's primary purpose, as discussed earlier.

For principals and assistant principals, one of the most important "right things" is instructional leadership. Yet this activity is often displaced by other tasks not as central to the principal's job. When Larry Hughes surveyed fifty-

one instructional supervisors in medium to very large Texas school systems, they reported, on average, that ideally they would like to allocate 30 percent of their time to classroom observation and work with individual teachers. But only 10 percent of their actual time was spent on this activity. What prevented the ideal from becoming actual? Heading the list of time constraints were telephone interruptions, preparing "useless" reports and other paperwork, excessive meetings, and spontaneous interruptions.

Besides needing to learn to better manage these time wasters (subject of a later section), these instructional supervisors need to reexamine their goals and priorities. "It is possible," Hughes says, "that the supervisor's and organization's expectations may not be the same." Such conflicting expectations happen all too frequently, he explains, "even when there are well written job descriptions." If you experience conflict between your own and others' expectations, Hughes recommends that you seek clarification of your job. This you can do by listing both major tasks and all those other tasks that are less central (and may in fact prevent accomplishment of the central tasks) but that seemingly must also be attended to. The next step is to discuss these lists with your superordinate and colleagues and reach agreement about them.

By following this job clarification process, you will be able to make sure your goals conform to your organization's goals. This being the case, your organization presumably will approve of clearing your job description of all tasks keeping you from accomplishment of agreed-upon high priority goals.

Your goals list can take any number of forms. Lakein recommends identification of lifetime goals, three-year goals, and six-month goals. Regardless of the form in which you put your goals statements, the important thing is that you put them in writing. List them, chart them, diagram them, or index-card them, but above all, *write them*! Write them because, as any four-year-old knows who has just penciled her own name for the first time: writing makes it real.

After listing your goals, the next step is to prioritize them. Not all goals or values are equally important, nor are they of the same importance at all times. Prioritize based on your point of view of right now. You can (and should) update your goals and priorities when your point of view changes—as it inevitably will.

Once you've prioritized, you're ready to select your two or three most important goals and to list specific, short-term activities that will further those goals. For example, if one of your goals is to initiate a program of gifted education in your school, your activities list might include checking with the school district to see what state and local funds are available; forming a committee of parents, teachers, and administrators to investigate various kinds of existing gifted programs; and so forth.

Finally, after listing activities for your three most important goals, prioritize again. This should result in your "A-1" goal and your "A-1" activity to further that goal, as Lakein would say. This activity constitutes your foremost "right thing": your most valuable, potential contribution to your school district,

your primary leadership responsibility.

Now the overriding question becomes: How are you going to find the time—in an already overburdened workday—to pursue this priority activity? The answer is simple: You identify time-wasters with the use of a daily time log and learn to manage those that are within your control.

The Daily Time Log

When Peter Drucker listed five characteristic practices that distinguished the effective executive, the one that topped his list was the fact that "effective executives know where their time goes." To know for certain where your time goes, most management consultants recommend that you keep some kind of *written* daily log for at least a week. If you find it difficult to fill in a time log, try this alternative suggested by Larry Stevens: "Design a grid with your normal duties listed along the top and 10- or 20-minute intervals down the side." As you go through the day, you only need to place checks in the appropriate squares.

To gain maximum benefit from a time log, you must use it again and again at least four times a year. This habitual use, points out Ruth Rees, enables you to profit from the "Hawthorne effect"—"the process of self-awareness, self-monitoring, and hence self-development for a more effective management of time."

The kind of log you use is less important than that you (or your secretary or assistant) track your time. You can track fifteen-minute segments, one-hour segments, or simply note the time whenever you change activities. You can track each distinct activity or only the main activity in the specified time block, or you can track only certain kinds of activities that concern you for some reason or another (telephone calls, drop-in visitors, scheduled meetings, whatever).

When you track your activities—perhaps at the end of each day—try to evaluate each activity on the basis of its significance. Michael Sexton and Karen Switzer recommend the following rating system:

- #1= Professional Goal Functions (long-range planning and leadership activities; curriculum planning, for example)
- #2= Critical/Crisis Functions (immediate, situational concerns; a student-teacher conflict, for example)
- #3= Maintenance Functions (routine administrative tasks; fire drills, for example)
- P= Personal Activities (calling home, going to the dentist)

While your primary responsibility as a leader is to engage in #1s, your time log will probably reveal that your workday is consumed entirely by #2s and #3s. Patrick Duignan found that the school superintendent is precluded from long-range planning and other leadership functions by virtue of the incredibly interruptive and discontinuous nature of his or her workday. Duignan observes that, within the superintendent's typical 8.2 hour, work-through-lunch

workday, he or she engages in about thirty-eight disparate activities, nearly 40 percent of which "lasted less than five minutes each."

Moreover, Duignan found that fully 25 percent of the superintendent's day is spent in unscheduled meetings (drop-in visitors are included here), and nearly 25 percent more is spent in scheduled meetings. Rather than acting as a decision-maker, then, the superintendent acts as a contact-person, an "information broker," who spends three-quarters of the day in verbal contacts for the purpose of receiving or dispensing information.

Does this sound familiar? Does your time log coincide with Duignan's observations? If so, then, like so many other leaders, you are working in the "reactive" mode, rather than in a self-directed "active" mode. Your response time (time spent responding to people, mail, and situations) far outweighs your discretionary time (time spent on A-1 activities). To put your workday into a more productive balance, you now need to recognize and manage time-wasters. Or, as Sexton and Switzer advise, you need to learn how to do the #2s and #3s *efficiently*, so that you will have time to do the #1s *effectively*.

Managing Time Wasters

The time-waster is a two-headed dragon. External time-wasters wear the face of "the other": visitors, telephone calls, meetings, paperwork, coworkers' needs. Internal time-wasters wear the face of the self: inability to say "no," inability to schedule and prioritize, inability to delegate, tendency to procrastinate. Let's look at these one at a time, with an eye toward specific, dragon-slaying strategies.

Visitors and Telephone Calls

Telephone and visitor interruptions are two of the three worst daily time-wasters (meetings being the third). Because they act as interrupters, they destroy concentration and momentum—the twins of productivity. Management of these time-wasters is, as always, first a matter of attitude and only then a matter of skill. Administrators must recognize that total accessibility (the "open-door" policy), while subjectively gratifying, is professionally counterproductive. It follows that administrators must value their own time before expecting others to do the same.

Most time management experts recommend reducing visitor and telephone interruptions through the use of "buffering" and "limiting" techniques. That is, they suggest you should buffer (insulate) yourself from excessive or unproductive personal contacts and consciously limit the time spent on each necessary or unavoidable contact.

Translated into office procedure, buffering is primarily accomplished by the secretary—who screens all calls and visitors—while limiting is accomplished by the development of some rather brusque habits, such as not offering coffee and tea to visitors, not offering your visitors a chair, not socializing excessively, and so forth.

However, these standard recommendations may be inappropriate in the educational setting. As educational managers, democratic and open communications with students, parents, colleagues, and staff probably constitute some of the highest and best uses of your time. Therefore, the conventional wisdom of business-oriented time management consultants requires some tempering here.

Perhaps the most productive strategy for harried educational administrators is the scheduling of regular blocks of time during which you are inaccessible to visitors and telephone calls. Because it is commonly accepted that one is unavailable when involved in a scheduled meeting, consider this block of time to be a "meeting with yourself"—as it certainly is.

During this time, have your calls intercepted by your secretary or your switchboard. Close the door to your office. Place bookshelves and files with often-needed information adjacent to your desk, so that such information is readily available. Strive to make yourself highly invisible during periods of inaccessibility, just as you strive to make yourself highly visible (in the staff lounge at lunch time, in the halls before school, in the meeting room before board meetings) during periods of accessibility.

Above all, train your staff and colleagues to respect this quiet time, because studies show that it will likely be the *only* productive work time available to you during the entire day.

When you select the portions of each day that you will be inaccessible, be sure to take into account what Ruth Rees calls "the ebb and flow of the organization." She cites the example of an elementary school principal who, because he considered himself a "morning person," reserved the first two hours of each day to work at his desk. Although he maintained an open-door policy the remainder of the day and for an hour in the early afternoon walked the halls and toured classrooms, the teachers perceived that he was inaccessible and deliberately avoiding them.

When the principal analyzed his schedule in light of the "institutional context," he realized the early morning period was one of the few times during the day when the teachers were free of students and could seek his counsel. Immediately he changed his schedule and told the staff he would be available each morning. And instantly, the school's climate improved. Observes Rees: "All that was required, as it turned out, was a synchronization of activities within the institution."

The next major external time-waster—meetings—is covered at length in chapter 13. The strategies discussed there for holding efficient, productive meetings will inevitably cut down on time wasted in inefficient, unproductive meetings. Note particularly the time-wise advice on scheduling, agendas, and limiting attendees.

Paperwork

After drop-ins, the telephone, and meetings, paperwork ranks as the

next most frustrating external time-waster. According to R. Alec MacKenzie, a cluttered desk and the personal disorganization it reflects "rank among the top ten barriers" to effective time use. To those who rationalize the clutter—"I can find anything I really want, and that's what's important"—he replies, "True, you can find anything—in time." Executives can redeem this wasted time by following some simple rules of managing paperwork.

Donna and Merrill Douglass assert that "there are only three kinds of paper": action items, information items, and throw-away items. After your secretary screens, categorizes, and prioritizes your mail accordingly, try some of these methods for effectively dealing with action and information items:

Action items. ❒ One of Lakein's laws prescribes that you "handle each piece of paper only once." In support, the Douglasses estimate that "at least 80 percent of the mail could be answered immediately when read." Don't let those action items pile up. Handle them quickly, in order of priority, at a scheduled time of the day.

❒ Action items with a low priority may not need doing at all. Lakein suggests a procrastination drawer: dump low priority items into it and see if they're ever missed.

❒ Weldy suggests that you categorize your action items into separately labelled manila folders: "urgent," "dictate," "to do," "for Faculty Bulletin," and so forth. MacKenzie prefers color-coded folders: "red for urgent and important, blue for action today, green for reading," and so forth.

❒ Delegate paperwork to your secretary. Pencil a brief note of response in the margin of incoming correspondence, letting your secretary draft the formal response from that.

❒ Whenever possible, use time-saving paperwork expediters: routing slips, attachment slips, form letters, form paragraphs, handwritten responses, and the telephone.

❒ Learn to use a dictating machine. You will save not only your own time (since one can dictate at sixty words per minute as opposed to writing longhand at ten words per minute), but your secretary's time as well (since transcribing by dictaphone is faster than either taking shorthand or reading longhand).

❒ Limit the items on your desk. MacKenzie says to keep on your desk only "the project you are working on" and "your planner/organizer," consisting of a daily/weekly/monthly plan, a list of objectives and projects, and other personal management helps. MacKenzie warns against leaving on your desk a stack of papers reminding you of things you don't want to forget. The problem is, he points out, these reminders work too well: every time you look up they distract you from the task at hand.

❒ Initiate a "tickler" or "suspense" filing system. Manila folders or accordion files labelled one through thirty-one and January through December will permit you to keep tract of upcoming tasks, commitments, or annual responsibilities. For example, if annual budget estimates are due each May, "tickle" a reminder in April's file that it is time to begin gathering the appropriate data.

Use the daily tickler files in the same way.

Information Items ❒ Use a variety of filing systems: desk top files and ticklers, desk files that include most-often-needed items of information, and cabinet files that are systematically arranged in a way that is clear to both yourself and your closest staffpersons.

❒ Obtain and use a computer with a good database management program. You can store and instantly retrieve personnel, financial, student, and other management data. As Larry Stevens says, "The time spent in developing a working knowledge of the computer will be returned many times over."

❒ Recognize this: Some studies estimate that fully 95 percent of all papers filed are never retrieved again. The Douglasses recommend the following steps for determining whether an item is worth keeping:

1. Have your secretary keep a log, for several months, of items retrieved from files. These items will comprise your "useful filing" list.
2. Before filing an item, ask yourself: "Does this item fit in the 'useful filing' category?" "Could I retrieve this information from someone else's files, if needed?" "What use shall I make of this item within the next year?"

Schedule an annual spring cleaning of the files, with an eye toward tossing as much as possible.

❒ Learn to skim reading matter or train your secretary to skim, highlight, and digest. Redirect reading matter to your subordinates and colleagues.

❒ Keep journals, articles, and updates in one section of your shelves, ready for availability when heading out to dentist appointments or business trips.

Before moving from "external" to "internal" time-wasters, mention should be made of one time displacer that actually straddles the two categories. This time waster is what Oncken and Wass (as described by Carol Giesecke and others) have termed "monkeys": those demands inappropriately placed on the administrator by subordinates. Whereas the administrator generally *must* respond to demands made by superiors, and whereas he or she generally *chooses* to respond to demands made by peers, the administrator needs to perceive demands made by subordinates as an often inappropriate use of his or her time and an example of "passing the buck upwards."

For example, a recently hired administrative assistant inquires about the district's pension plan. Rather than accepting the "monkey" and rifling among the files for explanatory documents, the time-wise administrator should briefly refer the new employee to the personnel department. Learning to shrug off "monkeys" is akin to learning to say "no"—the first internal time-waster we will consider.

Internal time-wasters are both the easiest and the hardest to control, and for the same reason: their control lies exclusively within yourself. Your success at managing them is entirely up to you, but, as always, awareness and attitude will take you halfway there.

Inability to Say "No"

Let's begin with learning to say "no." In Pamela Stanfield's words: "Don't shoot skinny rabbits." They "are not worth the effort it takes to shoot, skin, and clean them." Instead, wait for a fat rabbit.

Lakein advises that "you must set priorities based on the importance to you of the person doing the asking and the consequences if you don't do what's being asked." If you subsequently decide that the task is not a priority item, you simply and courteously refuse, with perhaps a brief explanation of your time constraints.

Peter Drucker suggests that you review your daily time log with a view toward asking yourself, "What would happen if this were not done at all?" He goes on to say that "all one has to do is to learn to say 'no' if an activity contributes nothing to one's own organization, to oneself, or to the organization for which it is to be performed." He concludes by asserting that you can thus dispose of one quarter of your time demands with no significant effect.

Similarly, W. A. Mambert recommends the "Wash Decision"—a decision not to proceed with a project when complications begin to outweigh the value of the final result. The fundamental principle implied in all these recommendations is that of the "primary purpose." With your chief contribution to the school district's primary purpose firmly in mind, deciding whether to say "yes" or "no" to any activity should be simplified.

Inability to Schedule

Consciousness of your primary purpose will also help to eliminate another internal time waster: the inability to schedule. Scheduling is actually a multifaceted gem that includes planning, prioritizing, clustering, and delegating. All are essential to managing time effectively.

You began to plan when you accomplished your prioritized list of goal statements and activities. Now you need to narrow your focus, to make the best use of the days that will carry you toward your goals.

Daily planning can be done first thing in the morning or last thing in the evening—whenever you have fifteen minutes of quiet time. Make a "to do" list that includes the day's chief tasks, including some steps toward accomplishment of your A-1 activity. Then systematically prioritize those tasks (using Sexton and Switzer's #1, #2, #3 system or Lakein's A, B, C system).

Prioritizing is greatly aided by knowledge of the 80/20 rule, Lakein's definition of which seems to be the most explicit:

> The 80/20 rule suggests that in a list of ten items, doing two of them will yield most (80 percent) of the value. Find these two, label them A, get them done. Leave most of the other eight undone, because the value you'll get from them will be significantly less than that of the two highest-value items. . . . It's important to remind yourself again and again not to get bogged down on low-value activities but to focus on the 20 percent where the high value is.

Next, coordinate your "to dos" with your scheduled appointments, remembering to schedule a block of quiet time for work on your A-1. While most management consultants recommend blocking out one or two hours for this leadership activity, Weldy estimates that the educational administrator can probably wrest only half an hour of such time from daily demands. Above all, schedule this time realistically. A glance at your daily time log should reveal peaks and lulls in external activities and in your own internal energy level. Common sense dictates, then, that you schedule your leadership time as close as possible to the intersection of peak energy and low activity levels.

After scheduling, attack your "to dos" in order of priority. Do the important tasks first, delegate whatever you can, and don't fret if the #3s have to wait for another day. It is not important to do everything—just the important things. Cluster similar activities (for example, all call-backs, all paperwork) whenever possible and steel yourself to finish each task before going on to the next, because clustering and completion eliminate wasteful transition time.

Inability to Delegate

For a variety of reasons, many of which are purely and emotionally subjective, most administrators find it difficult to delegate. Again, an attitudinal change must precede the learning of new skills. People tend to perceive delegation as a thrusting of one's "dirty work" onto others. Instead, the leader should distinguish between work that advances one's contribution to the organization's primary purpose and work that does not.

Once that distinction is made, the leader should retain the former and delegate the latter, in addition to delegating routine tasks, tasks at which others are more skilled, tasks at which the leader is already skilled, and tasks that the leader actively dislikes.

A quick review of your daily time log should raise your consciousness in regard to delegating. Assess each activity in terms of whether it could have been delegated and then commit yourself to better manipulation of this time displacer.

As Larry Hughes and Gerald Ubben explain, executives can delegate varying degrees of responsibility to subordinates, depending on their abilities and the nature of the project. Listed below are Hughes and Ubben's "six degrees of delegation." The farther down this list one goes, the less involvement is required of the executive and the more autonomy is granted the staff member.

1. "Look into this and give me the particulars. I will decide."
2. "Give me your analysis and recommendation for my review."
3. "Decide and let me know your decision. But wait for my go-ahead."
4. "Decide and let me know your decision. Then take action unless I say not to" (within some specified time).
5. "Decide and take action, but let me know what you did."
6. "Decide and take action. You need not check back with me."

Helen Reynolds and Mary Tramel offer useful lists of practical tips for delegating. Suffice it to say here that effective delegation requires clear communication with the delegatee, assignment of authority and decision-making capability to the delegatee, a system for monitoring and followup, and a relaxed attitude toward the delegatee's work procedures (results are more important than the methods used to obtain them).

Gilbert Weldy says that it helps to perceive delegation as an investment in time that accrues long-term benefits. One of those benefits is invaluable on-the-job training for your staff, whose expertise reflects directly on you, their leader. Moreover, your ability to rise to a more challenging position hinges directly on the knowledgeability and effectiveness of those you have trained in your current position. Say Hughes and Ubben, "There is some wisdom in the only partly facetious statement: 'Whatever is worth doing is worth getting someone else to do'."

Procrastination

Finally, the last internal time waster that deserves mention here is a demon with whom we are all familiar: procrastination. Procrastination is professionally debilitating in that we tend to procrastinate precisely those difficult, challenging A-1 activities with which we should be most integrally involved. Low priority tasks, on the other hand, are quickly accomplished, provide instant gratification, and are therefore completed with much more regularity.

Alan Lakein's advice on this subject is both practical and persuasive. In eight key chapters, he suggests a variety of tactics, including the following: recognizing the consequences of delay and the advantages of action; reducing a large task to small subtasks; working at the task for five minutes per day to initiate involvement; gathering additional data; performing a subtask of the A-1 that coincides with your current mood; setting deadlines and announcing your deadline to someone else; taking rest breaks; and rewarding yourself as subtasks are accomplished.

Of the four-part process to time management, this completes part three: subduing the doubleheaded dragon of external and internal time wasters. At this point a warning must be sounded. Incorporating any of the preceding strategies into your office routine may require uncomfortable changes in comfortable habits. For this reason, and because he is convinced that "evolutionary changes of style are more profitable than revolutionary changes," Ray Cross recommends adopting time management strategies gradually, one at a time. In other words, instead of quickly slaying the two-headed dragon, you should actually try starving it to death. Once you have successfully internalized a new strategy and made that new strategy a comfortable habit, you can then add another, and another, to your repertoire.

And to what end? Darrell Lewis and Tor Dahl state, "It is generally accepted that most managers should be able to clear about 25 percent of their time with little or no drop in current output"—which leads us to part four. Thus

cleared, that time becomes discretionary time, leadership time, time for planning and executing Drucker's "right things."

Weldy closes his monograph with a shopping list of suggested leadership activities that includes detailing a "great idea" for your school, making fresh contacts with students and parents, planning the next year's chief objectives, and writing an article. At this point we shift our attention to another leadership activity worthy of addition to Weldy's list. Having begun the management of time, why not research and implement a program for its corollary—the management of stress?

Stress Management

Previously it was noted that time and stress management are two strands of the same braid. Not only does mismanagement of the one exacerbate mismanagement of the other, but also specific problem areas in the management of both are identical. For instance, paperwork, telephone and visitor interruptions, excessive meetings, lack of planning time, and procrastination are both time wasters *and* stress producers.

The correlations between time and stress management suggest that the strategies for attacking both would also correlate. And so they do. Like time management, the management of stress requires the following: (1) a shift in attitudes and level of awareness, (2) self-analysis and identification of stressors via the daily stress log, and (3) practical techniques for the management of those stressors identified. As always, awareness and attitude come first.

What precisely is stress? Among the myriad of definitions in print, that advanced by Donald Dudley and Elton Welke is exceptional for its simplicity: *stress* is "an adaptive response in which your body prepares, or adjusts, to a threatening situation."

Such preparation manifests itself in a host of symptoms, both physiological (increase in heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and levels of adrenalin) and psychological (irritability, depression, anxiety, withdrawal). Further, stress is integrally related to control: the greater one's sense of powerlessness over the stressor, the greater the stress.

Because one's perception of a "threatening situation" is often highly subjective (discounting obvious physical calamities), stress itself is a highly subjective phenomenon; it truly is "all in the mind." Consequently, intellectual awareness of and proper emotional attitudes toward stress are even more important than a similar enlightenment toward time, which is a highly objective phenomenon.

One instructive orientation into common stressors and their relative magnitudes is Holmes and Rahe's Social Readjustment Rating Scale. The scale (see table 1) lists forty-three different "life events," ranging from "Death of Spouse" to "Minor Violations of the Law" and assigns each event a numerical value (from a high of 100 to a low of 11) that correlates to the stressfulness of

Table 1. Social Readjustment Rating Scale

Rank	*Life Event*	*Mean Value*
1	Death of a Spouse	100
2	Divorce	73
3	Marital Separation	65
4	Jail Term	63
5	Death of Close Family Member	63
6	Personal Injury or Illness	53
7	Marriage	50
8	Fired at Work	47
9	Marital Reconciliation	45
10	Retirement	45
11	Change in Health of Family Member	44
12	Pregnancy	40
13	Sex Difficulties	39
14	Gain of New Family Member	39
15	Business Readjustment	39
16	Change in Financial State	38
17	Death of Close Friend	37
18	Change to Different Line of Work	36
19	Change in Number of Arguments with Spouse	35
20	Mortgage over $10,000	31
21	Foreclosure of Mortgage or Loan	30
22	Change in Responsibilities at Work	29
23	Son or Daughter Leaving Home	29
24	Trouble with In-Laws	29
25	Outstanding Personal Achievement	28
26	Wife Begins or Stops Work	26
27	Begin or End School	26
28	Change in Living Conditions	25
29	Revision of Personal Habits	24
30	Trouble with Boss	23
31	Change in Work Hours or Conditions	20
32	Change in Residence	20
33	Change in Schools	20
34	Change in Recreation	19
35	Change in Church Activities	19
36	Change in Social Activities	18
37	Mortgage or Loan Less than $10,000	17
38	Change in Sleeping Habits	16
39	Change in Number of Family Get-Togethers	15
40	Change in Eating Habits	15
41	Vacation	13
42	Christmas	12
43	Minor Violations of the Law	11

Reprinted with permission from *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*,vol. II, T. H. Holmes, R. H. Rahe, 1967, p. 216, table III, Pergamon Press, Ltd.

the event. To use the scale, you merely note which "life events" occurred to you during the previous two years and tally the associated numerical values. The significance of the scale lies in the fact that studies have shown a positive correlation between degrees of stress and the probability of incipient illness or accidents, as Dudley and Welke explain:

> Should you accumulate 150 points on the Social Readjustment Rating Scale within a period of two years, there is a 33 percent probability for you to contract an illness or suffer an accident. When 300 points are accumulated, the probability soars to 66 percent. At 450 points the probability is almost certain—in the 90 percent range.

While a personal tally on the rating scale will certainly prove revealing, Walter Gmelch (1978) issues this caveat against an overly literal reading of the scale:

> A few points should be kept in mind: first, both pleasant (marriage) and unpleasant (divorce) life events can cause harmful stress; second, no one can escape, nor does anyone necessarily want to escape all these crises, since to some degree stress is life; and, third, due to differing abilities to cope, the same event does not have the same impact on all individuals.

The ability to cope is a learned set of skills and is central to the understanding and management of stress. How well do you cope? Dudley and Welke offer a coping quiz that asks questions ranging from "Do people who know you well think you get upset easily?" to "Have you set goals for the future that satisfy you and are realistic?" Your answers should prove as revealing as your tally on the Social Readjustment Rating Scale.

Another instructive exercise is the "Type 'A' Behaving" questionnaire included in Michael and Delores Giammatteo's book. A high proportion of yes answers to such questions as "I'm frequently in a hurry," "I really enjoy winning and hate to lose," and "My job is the most important thing in my life" indicates the probability of a "Type A" personality, defined by the Giammatteos as "one who is always pushing, doing, creating, initiating, and who may be headed toward an early death or heart attack."

After orienting yourself to the subject of stress in general and personal stress factors in particular, you'll want to take stock of the attitudes with which you confront your working day. Constructive attitudes for the management of stress will be discussed later. For now, be aware of the following attitudes that promote stress: authoritarianism, intolerance, being overly concerned with what "should be" rather than with what "is," indecisiveness, worry, perfectionism, "stockpiling hurts," magnifying minor irritants, failure to communicate feelings, believing that you are a victim of fate and of your feelings, and needing and seeking love and approval from everyone.

Although this list is not a definitive one, familiarity with these negative attitudes provides one more orientation into the subject of stress and one more preparation for self-analysis and the identification of specific stressors.

Identifying Stressors

The purpose of tracking sources of stress for several weeks is the same as that for tracking time: to become aware of specific problem areas and their patterns of reoccurrence. Gmelch (1981) recommends that school leaders tally, at the end of each day for one week, the most stressful incident (such as confronting a staff member), the most stressful series of related incidents (such as frequent telephone interruptions), and the approximate level of your stress on a scale from one to ten. As with the daily time log, the form of this tracking activity is less important than that you do this preliminary exercise and do it in writing.

After tracking your sources of stress, you might want to compare your stressors with Gmelch's administrative stress index—a list of thirty-five typical stressors identified by educational administrators, including "preparing and allocating budget resources," "trying to resolve differences between/among students," and "being involved in the collective bargaining process." Of these thirty-five stressors, Gmelch identified and ranked the following top ten:

1. Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies
2. Feeling that meetings take up too much time
3. Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time
4. Trying to gain financial support for programs
5. Trying to resolve personnel conflicts
6. Evaluating staff members' performance
7. Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members)
8. Feelings that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day
9. Imposing excessively high expectations on myself
10. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls

Another study used methodology similar to that of the Social Readjustment Rating Scale. Robert Koff and his colleagues factored and weighted four areas of stress for elementary, middle, and secondary school principals. Conflicts with teachers were consistently ranked as the highest stressor. Irregular events with severe consequences—events in which the administrators felt threatened and powerless—were rated the next most stressful. (Examples include teacher strikes, involuntary transfers, bad publicity, threats and assaults, and legal actions against the school.) Student conflicts were rated below these, though the stress therein increased significantly from elementary to high school. Finally, routine management tasks were consistently ranked as the lowest, most manageable stressor.

All these findings echo what was noted earlier, that stress is integrally related to feelings of powerlessness—feeling out of control. Successful stress management requires not just the identification of your stressors but also the categorizing of them into those that are within your control and those that are

not. The distinction will determine your strategy for attacking the stressor, though *all* the various strategies share one trait in common: all return a measure of control to their user.

Managing Controllable Stressors

In any discussion of stress management, one strategy always highlighted is that of time management. Indeed, four of the top ten stressors on Gmelch's list involve use of time: meetings, paperwork, heavy workload, and telephone interruptions. Properly executed, time management creates the balance and control in one's life that Alan Lakein repeatedly emphasizes.

But time management can be subsumed by a larger, more generalized concept, that of "pacing," of consciously regulating the ebb and flow of your life. Time management will help you to do that. So will familiarity with and proper use of the Social Readjustment Rating Scale; for instance, if you are aware that you've recently experienced a high number of life change events, you should consider consciously forgoing another controllable change—moving to a new neighborhood, for example, or taking classes toward your Ph.D.

You can also pace yourself by regulating what Donald Dudley and Elton Welke refer to as naturally occurring cycles of "activation and withdrawal." While it is normal to alternate between periods of outward-reaching activity and periods of quiet renewal, the authors caution against abrupt swings between either extreme:

> If your customary manner is type A, fast-paced, try to slow down by mild degrees in a uniform way rather than suddenly embracing total relaxation between outbursts of activity. In the same way, if you are a classic type B, relaxed and calm, try to modestly pick up your life tempo uniformly across periods of both work and play.

Another strategy for managing stress is creative problem-solving. The applicability of problem-solving to stress management lies in the fact that delays in confronting problems inevitably tend to magnify them. Such procrastination not only allows the problem situation to deteriorate, but also allows mental mushrooming of the problem—mental exaggeration that is disproportionate to the problem's actual severity.

A third strategy in the management of stress—control of communications—is discussed in chapter 11. The importance of skillful communication to stress management becomes clearer as one recalls that authoritarianism (excessively directive communications), intolerance (excessively negative communications), and failure to express feelings (excessively repressive communications) are three key promoters of stress. It's important to recognize that the words you use—and choose not to use—don't merely describe reality; they create it.

Job and role clarification also contribute significantly to the manage-

ment of stress. A job can be inherently stressful (hence worsening each daily occasion of stress) if one's role is unclear or subject to conflicting expectations, or if the job involves too much work, too little work, too little opportunity for achievement, and/or inadequate performance evaluation.

"Preventive management," assert James and Jonathan Quick, is the key to reducing this kind of stress. While the authors recommend several specific management tools for the clarification and restructuring of jobs/roles, any process that analyzes and sets out, in writing, the expectations inherent to each job is useful. Peter Drucker's well-known system of "Management by Objectives" is a prime example.

Finally, controllable stressors can be confronted one at a time via formalized methods of frontal attack. Gmelch (1981) offers the following systematic procedure:

1. Identify your most bothersome stressors and select *one* to resolve.
2. Search for the causes of this stressful event.
3. Generate a set of possible solutions to remedy the causes.
4. Specify a plan of action you will take to alleviate one cause.
5. Develop a time table to implement your plan of action.
6. Set a date and method for how you will follow up and evaluate the effectiveness of your plan.
7. Investigate the potential problems or unintended consequences (additional stress) your action plan may have created.

At the risk of belaboring the obvious, one last management strategy for controllable stressors is worthy of mention before moving on to the subject of uncontrollable stressors: that strategy is simply to ask for help. Management consultants, self-help books, professional associations, central administration, your professional peer group, the school advisory council or other parent committees, and professional analysts can all help to generate solutions to stressful situations. Don't suffer in silence. Use them.

Managing Uncontrollable Stressors

When stressors are beyond your personal control (for example, statewide budget cuts, a personality conflict with your immediate superior), you must seek to reduce stress in the one area left to you: within yourself. This is accomplished through a series of strategies that build up your resistance to stress—that inoculate you, so to speak, and increase your level of tolerance.

General physical health and well-being are fundamental here. The importance of regular exercise, good eating habits, and periods of recreation are cliches that nevertheless merit repeating.

Because stress is such a subjective phenomenon, a variety of mental skills work to fight stress on its home ground—in the mind. Many of these skills—meditation, prayer, biofeedback, yoga, the relaxation response—increase one's inner sense of calm well-being. "Mental imagery"—the conscious

production of positive mental scenes—is also often suggested as a means of manipulating one's sympathetic nervous system into a state of relaxation.

James Manuso recommends the learning of a "quieting response"—a reaction to minor daily irritations in which "one takes two deliberate deep breaths, paying attention to relaxing the jaw, the shoulders and tongue, and one tells himself he will not permit his body to get involved in this. This breaks the sequence of the stress response."

Similarly, "thought stopping" is a means of quieting internal anxiety. In thought stopping, one learns to banish obsessive or worrisome thoughts by mentally shouting "Stop!" and then insisting to oneself that "I'm not going to think about that now." After this mental interruption, the individual then consciously seeks an alternative thought or activity with which to become involved.

Since we began by discussing attitudes, it's appropriate that we circle back as we approach our close. The attitude most relevant to this section is *tolerance*—tolerance of individuals unlike ourselves and of situations unlike those we desire. In support, the Giammatteos state that "tolerance demands serenity on our part to become aware and then to make decisions about our response to the environment, people, and philosophies in it."

Thus far we have considered ways school administrators can manage their own stress. As leaders of their organizations, however, their responsibilities extend beyond themselves to the welfare of their employees.

Managing Stress in the Organization

School administrators, following the example of corporate executives, are taking a more active role as managers of stress in their organizations. The cost of stress in absenteeism, inefficiency, and resignations from burnout is high enough, many administrators recognize, to warrant effective counter measures.

Stress reduction in the organization takes two forms. One approach, not yet as common in schools as in the business world, operates on the assumption that organizations themselves can produce stress in their employees. The role of managers is to examine the work environment for causes of job stress and take steps to reduce it. Second, many school districts, again following the lead of businesses, have initiated "wellness programs," which encourage their employees to stay fit and lead healthy lives; stress reduction is a normal component of these programs.

Job Stress and Teacher Stress

Of course, a certain amount of stress in the workplace is unavoidable and even desirable: high standards and urgent deadlines motivate us to perform well. But stress also results when, for example, the heating and ventilating system doesn't work, employees are not appropriately involved in decisions, and there are conflicting expectations for what employees are to do. This kind of stress can be avoided simply by good management practices.

According to Nico van Dijkhuizen, a psychologist who has studied

stress in middle management for the Royal Netherlands Navy, a stress-producing organization can be recognized by the following "signals": decreased work performance, high absenteeism (some employees may partially absent themselves by showing up at work but avoiding certain tasks or people), high staff turnover, irritability and interpersonal conflict, and decline in staff members' mutual support (for example, they show less interest in one another's problems). Van Dijkhuizen also suggests paying attention to the behaviors of individual staff members. Signs of stress include increased smoking, sleeplessness, sudden changes in clothing habits, eating too little or too much, excessive drinking, and high blood pressure.

If you observe these symptoms in the staff members of your school or district, careful diagnosis of the causes is in order. Van Dijkhuizen lists potential contributors to stress in an organization and recommends corrective steps. Several of these checkpoints are presented here along with their possible applications in schools. First is the physical job-environment; look for such conditions as student disorder, litter, and excessive noise levels. Second, the organizational structure, if too hierarchical, may need to be flattened. Current efforts to create a more professional (less bureaucratic) work environment for teachers may well lead to a reduction in the stress level of teaching. Third, jobs may need to be restructured to achieve a better fit between employees and the organization. Van Dijkhuizen emphasizes that not all employees are alike: some thrive on challenge whereas others may need to have their workloads reduced. Fourth, "information needs to be channelled and apportioned very carefully" so that "all employees get the right information at the right time."

Fifth is the need for clarity. Every employee needs to know not only what he or she must do and what others expect, but must also know "general company policies and the company's results." Says van Dijkhuizen: "Such clarity enables one to place one's own job in a broader perspective, bringing positive effects to self-esteem." In schools, this need will be met if the principal clearly communicates the school's mission and regularly informs teachers and students of their progress toward achieving that mission.

Sixth is "support from superior and colleagues." Van Dijkhuizen says his research indicates that such support softens the effects of stress on employees' lives. Collegial support is particularly necessary for teachers, because the traditional school structure isolates teachers from one another and makes it difficult for them to receive the encouragement and support of their colleagues.

Finally, when employees are given the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their work, they often experience "more clarity, less conflicts and better relations with others." Practical ways to involve teachers and other staff members in school decisions are given in chapter 7.

Most of the attention to reduction of stress in schools appropriately focuses on the work environment of teachers. Betsy Schlansker notes research indicating "that as many as 25 percent of K-12 teachers may be experiencing a damaging degree of burnout." In her own survey of teachers, five of the ten

most stressful events were "management tensions": "notification of unsatisfactory performance; involuntary transfer; denial of promotion or advancement; overcrowded classrooms; and disagreements with supervisors." Schlansker says that "these are areas in which the principal could intervene, mediate, or in some way provide support."

Diane Frey and Joseph Young advise principals to watch for these symptoms of teacher burnout: "apathy, fatigue, tension, frustration, boredom, irritability, detachment, rigidity, demoralization, hopelessness, and a sense of not being appreciated." Then they suggest a number of actions principals can take to alleviate teachers' stress. Notice that several of the actions listed below correspond with the checkpoints on van Dijkhuizen's list of organizational stressors.

- Eliminate unnecessary stress through careful planning; for example, give teachers adequate notice of mandatory meetings.
- Maintain a high praise/criticism ratio (at least 3:1).
- Provide "inservice workshops on stress management, relaxation, visual imagery, biofeedback, and cognitive restructuring."
- Establish a support network that allows teachers to share problems and resources.
- "Identify potentially exhausting jobs and rotate teachers periodically out of these positions."
- Provide opportunity for teachers to express their ideas and to participate in decisions relevant to them.
- Help teachers "to lower unrealistic expectations" for themselves.
- Encourage the use of humor—"the ability to laugh at oneself can help one survive even the worst situations."

When Raymond Calabrese polled a sample of teachers to find out which of their stress factors were most under the control of the principal, they identified four areas: "elimination of ambiguous policies; increase of visible support; improved communications and directions; and increased positive feedback." Three of these items, he notes, "relate directly to the principal's ability to communicate."

In sum, school leaders who expect excellence from their teaching staffs must provide a proportionate degree of support. In addition to demonstrating their own caring and assistance, principals can lead the faculty in creating networks of collegial sharing so teachers can support one another.

Wellness Programs

An increasingly popular districtwide strategy for combatting health and stress problems is the employee wellness program. During the past decade many school districts have followed the lead of PepsiCo, IBM, Kodak, and other corporations in instituting programs that typically involve organized recreation, workshops on health issues (such as stress management, nutrition, safe living, alcohol dependency, exercise), stop-smoking campaigns, medical tests, and inducements for regular doctor checkups. Some districts add activities and

instruction for students and the community as part of their public relations efforts.

Through employee wellness programs, school districts seek such benefits as higher productivity, fewer substitutes, positive adult role models for students, and the possibility of reduced health insurance premiums. A reduction in premiums may be possible if the wellness program leads to a significant decrease in insurance claims by employees and if the insurance company offers a discount for reduced claims (not all do).

According to data in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (cited by Dennis Colacino and Michael Cohen), 1.3 percent of the U.S. population are responsible for half of all hospital costs. These high-cost patients, say Colacino and Cohen, are "far more likely to smoke, be overweight, abuse alcohol and possess an adverse life-style." If wellness programs can lead such individuals to adopt more healthy habits, it is obvious that these programs can dramatically affect health costs, as well as reduce the stress that results from abuse of one's body.

Conclusion

The successful management of time and stress cannot be exercised in a vacuum. Nearly all the strategies, and even some of the attitudes, require a team approach. Minimally, that team consists of you and your secretary, since the secretary is the administrator's partner in production.

Programs for time and stress management should encompass the leader's support staff and colleagues and, better yet, even filter upwards. Many of the time/stress management strategies discussed—delegation, role clarification and restructuring, rejecting monkeys, communication skills—are dependent upon contact with and cooperation from the leader's colleagues.

But more significantly, these programs involve your coworkers because you are in a leadership role and are therefore—for better or for worse—a role model whose attitudes and practices set the tone for the entire office. And as a role model, your staff can perceive you in one of three ways: passively ineffectual in the management of time and stress; actively detrimental in the management of time and stress (a time-waster and stress-carrier); or worthy of emulation in the management of time and stress—a true leader.

Managing time. Managing stress. Concentrating on effectiveness, contribution, and purpose. What results from accepting these challenges? As usual, Peter Drucker says it well:

> What is being developed here is not information, but character: foresight, self-reliance, courage. What is being developed here, in other words, is leadership—not the leadership of brilliance and genius, to be sure, but the much more modest yet more enduring leadership of dedication, determination, and serious purpose.